

DECEMBER 6, 1989\*

ask yourself how you bear this state everyday this chromosomal state of x plus  
x like the day you step from the number seventeen cross the street up the concrete steps  
faster along the corridor into the university classroom late and a boy with a semi-  
automatic rushes in and starts shooting starts shouting a December everyday says he hates  
women says he hates feminists tells the men in the classroom to leave and they do then  
he shoots round after round until you are all shot the x on your sweaters marks you you bear  
this state of target and in the news your mothers cry for you and your sisters cry and your aunts  
and girlfriends cry you are every woman in this city this December everyday the hard-  
packed snow moans beneath your everywoman boots as you hunch home from your job as nanny  
or your job in the greasy spoon dishing poutine and gravy ask yourself how you bear it

you are everywoman you understand warnings by your parents don't take  
candy don't expect too much by your husband in the kitchen when you arrive late with the  
kids from daycare and the groceries and set the bags on the counter and he says see what  
happens what did they expect

how you bear it ask yourself why you are in all the cities you are up and  
down fence-bound laced-up country lanes you are on wind-beaten coastlines in shiploads  
of refugees in prisons in bedrooms on streets pacing for the next trick you bear it the  
state of want the state of use the state of disrespect of ridicule of wishing you were dead  
ask yourself why and if no good answer comes

if no good answer comes tear down every poster every newsstand every high-  
tension wire every billboard every high-rise every highway sign leading out of town every  
aeroplane in the sky every high and mighty penthouse every bar and grill tear up every alley  
where you were hurt every research paper that described you and got it wrong every house that  
trapped you every letter every spite every thought that thought you less every x and y with too  
much breath in your face or too much blade at your throat every shout every temper every gust  
of grit around your feet every car parked outside your door every doorway every bank every  
bonnet every promise every classroom every boy with a semi-automatic under his right arm  
rushing in yelling freeze just before you do